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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT NINEWA: NINEWA GOVERNOR MEASURED IN RESPONSE  
TO DE-BA,ATHIFICATION EFFORTS

Classified By: Classified by Ninewa PRT Team Leader W. Patrick Murphy f  
or reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

12. (C) SUMMARY: Taking a pragmatic approach to the Iraqi Government's de-Ba'athification efforts, Ninewa Provincial Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi suggested the current controversy may play to the favor of coalitions most affected by the ban.

Wary of past ineffective Sunni boycotts, al-Nujaifi suggested that opting out of the electoral process would only serve to strengthen those behind the de-Ba'athification efforts. Offering similar sentiments, two senior district officials suggested that while the timing of the disqualification efforts is disingenuous, it will not affect the perceived legitimacy of the electoral process. In our recent engagement, al-Nujaifi actually revealed a hint of glee at the prospect of gaining a windfall from the controversy. The opaque disqualification imbroglio could become the cause celebre that aids secular coalitions like al-Iraqia. END SUMMARY.

OPPORTUNITY FOUND IN AN "ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY"

13. (C) Ninewa PGOV al-Nujaifi, a leading Sunni Arab politician in northern Iraq and brother of current Council of Representatives (COR) member and al-Iraqia Coalition partner Osama al-Nujaifi, acknowledged to Ninewa PRT Team Leader on January 24 that some local officials have demanded a boycott of the upcoming national parliamentary elections in response to the GOI's de-Ba'athification efforts. Recalling ineffective Sunni-led boycotts in the past, al-Nujaifi referred to such rhetoric as dangerous. He said that he would counter nascent boycott efforts by encouraging the local population to participate in the political process, despite characterizing the disqualification of election candidates as an "attack on democracy."

14. (C) Finding opportunity in the controversy, al-Nujaifi declared that the de-Ba'athification efforts will create heroes of the excluded politicians and serve to strengthen their respective coalitions by providing a well-publicized rallying cry. Further demonstrating caution as a result of the fallout of 2005's Sunni political boycott, al-Nujaifi opined that those behind the de-Ba'athification efforts would find great satisfaction if the most affected coalitions opted out of the election.

THE ABSURDITY OF IT ALL

15. (C) Echoing al-Nujaifi's comments, the Deputy Mayor of Tal Afar, Ninewa's second largest city, and the Mayor of the Sunni Arab al-Hadr District described separately the de-Ba,athification controversy to PRT Ninewa members as the topic of much local discussion. They assessed that ire is focused on the absurdity of the 11th hour action, rather than on the legitimacy of the electoral process or even the eventual results. Chief among the population's concerns, each official conveyed, is the distressing notion that many banned candidates have already served for years in the COR or Government of Iraq administration without issue. Both officials also said the primary objection to de-Ba'athification is not its political motivations, but rather that the Accountability and Justice Commission does

not trust the people enough to make their own decisions.  
COMMENT: THEIR LOSS, MY GAIN

¶6. (C) Having motivated his Sunni base to vote in record numbers in January 2009 by sensationalizing controversial and polarizing issues (such as the coalition occupation), al-Nujaifi may have identified the panacea to drive otherwise apathetic Sunni voters to the national polls in Ninewa. He has been surprisingly measured in his response to the Ba'athification process, and in our January 24 engagement Q&A, Ba'athification process, and in our January 24 engagement actually revealed a hint of glee at the prospect of gaining a windfall from the controversy. The opaque disqualification imbroglio could become the cause célèbre that aids secular blocs like the al-Iraqia coalition of which he is a part.  
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